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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 001162

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [RW](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT INFILTRATES RWANDA'S  
INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

REF: A. KIGALI 00105

[B](#). 03 KIGALI 01990

Classified By: Maya Dietz, Political Officer. Reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The new Chief Editor of Rwanda's most independent newspaper, "Umuseso", Charles Kabonero, was detained for six weeks in December 2003, not recently as reported by international media. He reports that a special intelligence unit within the National Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), tasked with "shutting down" the paper, recruited and armed an "Umuseso" employee who spied on the paper for the GOR. The police continue to threaten to confiscate the paper when it prints articles critical of the government or government officials. Most recently, only intervention by the RDF's Chief of General Staff prevented authorities from confiscating an issue that published an article suggesting a Burundi clique was challenging President Kagame's power. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Contrary to recent reports in the international press, Charles Kabonero, Chief Editor of Rwanda's primary independent newspaper, "Umuseso", has not been in detention for the last six weeks. He explained to Poloff in an August 6 meeting that he had been detained beginning in December 2003, and was held day and night for six weeks, without being charged. He, along with other "Umuseso" journalists and editors, were held at a Department of Military Intelligence (DMI) center in Dikaranga. (Note: Post has not been able to confirm such a location. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) Kabonero, and the newspaper, however, have been experiencing difficulties over the past two months. In early June, according to Kabonero, an Assistant Commissioner in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Director of the Special Intelligence Unit, John Gacinya Rugumya, approached a new "Umuseso" journalist and offered him Rwf 5 million (approximately USD 8,700) to help the CID shut down the newspaper. The journalist accepted the offer and began providing the CID with names of "Umuseso" sources, information about its employees, and an analysis of the paper's strengths and weaknesses. Kabonero alleges that Gacinya even gave the spy a handgun, suggesting that he could either "cause trouble" at the newspaper's office, forcing the police to come and arrest everyone; or, more sinisterly, the spy could kill those present in the office, and the CID would burn the building.

[1](#)4. (C) Kabonero learned of the plot when "Umuseso" employees who had been emailed by the informant asked Kabonero why this new employee was seeking sensitive information from them. Kabonero then gathered evidence and wrote letters--first to the Commissioner General of the CID, then to the Minister of Information and the President of the High Council of the Press. While there was an encounter between the spy and Kabonero at the newspaper's office on July 31, Kabonero and other employees were only temporarily detained by the judicial police. Instead, the CID froze "Umuseso" bank accounts, Kabonero said. The judicial police have begun questioning the "Umuseso" marketing representative and accountants, hoping to find some irregularity on which to detain the staff and/or shut down the paper, according to Kabonero.

[1](#)5. (C) Kabonero believes there is little recourse for him or his journalists in the Rwandan system. The High Council has refused to take up their case, and "Umuseso" has already lost one lawyer due to pressure from GOR officials to desist from his work on their behalf. "Umuseso" most frequently faces harassment for publishing articles concerning army officials. Kabonero claims the police never question the truth of the articles, but rather seek to learn where the paper gets its information. Kabonero stated that he has been told while in detention that he will be punished "with rules not in the official books".

[1](#)6. (C) According to Kabonero, the judicial police threatened to confiscate the most recent issue of "Umuseso", which featured an article written by Kabonero suggesting that an alliance of returnees from Burundi was beginning to challenge President Kagame's authority. The article suggests that Denis Polisi (Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies), Charles Murigande (Minister of Foreign Affairs and

Cooperation), and Francois Ngarambe (RPF Secretary General) form the power-center of this group. One example Kabonero gave was Polisi's blocking of legislation that came directly from the President's office. Kabonero believes this issue was not confiscated because he appealed to the RDF Chief of General Staff, Major General James Kabarebe, for help. Kabarebe, he said, called the head of judicial police, Emmanuel Bayingana, and told him not to confiscate the paper. The three accused (Polisi, Murigande, and Ngarambe) have publicly denounced the accusations; Polisi called a press conference earlier this week to announce he would take legal action against "Umuseso".

17. (C) COMMENT: Over the past two years, the quality of "Umuseso" reporting has steadily decreased, as GOR harassment and repeated detentions have led editor after editor to flee the country and seek asylum. On the other hand, it remains the only newspaper in Rwanda willing to print stories critical of the GOR, and many Rwandans believe its news to be credible. The alleged intelligence operation against the paper suggests that the GOR wants to eliminate the paper entirely, not just weaken it. As Kabonero points out, the paper has never been accused of violating the media law, which would allow the GOR to close the paper permanently. Instead, it seems the GOR is using the flailing paper to identify any possible leaks in the government.

18. (C) On several occasions, the GOR has gone to great lengths to confiscate issues of "Umuseso" that report derogatory information on senior GOR officials. In November 2003, authorities entered BBC's Kigali offices to seize information on the Secretary General of the National Security Service that had been passed to BBC by "Umuseso" (ref B). When the GOR has allowed "Umuseso" to criticize GOR officials, their resignations have followed. Earlier this year, the GOR allowed "Umuseso" to publish allegations of financial improprieties that implicated former Prosecutor General and Supreme Court Vice President Gerald Gahima (ref A). Within weeks, Gahima resigned and his brother, former Ambassador to the U.S. Theogene Rudasingwa, immediately announced a sudden leave of absence from his post as President Kagame's Chief of Staff. That the GOR has allowed "Umuseso" to publish a report claiming that the Foreign Minister and other senior officials are challenging Kagame's power may therefore reflect tensions within the administration. END COMMENT.

O'LEARY